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# Constructional Change of *complement as it SEEMs*\*

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## 1. Introduction

Recently, more and more linguistic research has been conducted on discourse markers (cf. Shiffrin 1987), pragmatic markers (cf. Fraser 1996), comment clauses (cf. Brinton 2008) and related issues. Some of those phenomena are inseparably linked to human cognition, and actually they employ verbs denoting cognitive processes such as inference (e.g. *(as) it seems*), visual perception (e.g. discourse markers *look* and *see*) and auditory perception (e.g. topic marker *listen* and evidential marker *I hear*).

This paper deals with the construction called “the complement-as-construction,” which takes the form *(as) complement as S V*<sup>1</sup> and has causal, concessive, and concomitant uses (Kjellmer 1992; Tottie 2001, 2002). As will be shown below, most previous studies discuss the constructions with *be* as the main verb, and instances like (1), which take other verbs (*sounds* and *seems*), have not been explored thoroughly.

- (1) a. *Incredible as it seems*, America’s infotech infrastructure is no longer world-class.  
b. Some have speculated that the new stamping makes it easier for the hitter to pick up the spin on the ball. This is the one visible change in this year’s ball - so, *as unlikely as it seems*, you figure it’s possible.  
c. *As cold as it sounds*, “Wall Street views layoffs as a good thing,” he said.  
d. *As cliché as it sounds*, “bears are probably more afraid of you than you are of them,” ...

(COCA, emphasis added)

In these instances, the main verbs are SEEM-type verbs, CPV (copulative perception verbs) or *seem*, which code perception, inference, or inference based on perception. Recent studies handle the constructions which include those verbs from a standpoint of subjectivity (cf. Taniguchi 1997; Gisborne 2010). Interestingly, instances like (1) are not regarded as pure concessive use, in that they are not used simply to indicate concession

for the counterargument of an utterance or a logically opposite argument. Rather, they are viewed as a construction similar to sentence adverbials with discourse, pragmatic, and interpersonal functions.

This paper aims to demonstrate that *comp. as it seems/sounds* (henceforth “*comp. as it SEEMs*”) has gone through a constructional change and that it has gained use as a discourse/pragmatic marker through this process. This study is based on quantitative data from the corpora, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) and the Corpus of American Soap Operas (SOAP).

## 2. Previous studies

### 2.1 Complement-as-construction

The complement-as-construction<sup>2</sup> has three types of use in terms of the relation between main clause and subordinate clause: concessive, causal, and concomitant use (Kjellmer 1992; Tottie 2001, 2002). Causal use (2a, c) and concessive use (2b, d) can be paraphrased as clauses of *though* and *because*, respectively. In the case of concomitant use as in (2e), the *as*-clause merely describes “knowledge shared by writer and reader” (Kjellmer 1992: 342).

- (2) a. *Tall as he was*, he was able to reach the top shelf. (Tottie 2001: 307)
  - b. *Tall as he was*, he was not able to reach the top shelf. (*ibid.*)
  - c. *Tired as he was*, he fell asleep immediately. (Kjellmer 1992: 339)
  - d. *Tired as he was*, he felt obliged to finish the chapter. (*ibid.*: 340)
  - e. ... *unable as he [President Eisenhower] was* himself to say his running was best for the country, unconsciously he had placed his party before his country. (*ibid.*: 342)
- (emphasis added)

Previous studies mainly discuss the instances which take *be* as the main verb. Although Tottie (2001: 312) includes other kinds of verbs in his discussion, he only analyzes examples like (3), arguing that they “seem unlikely to have a causal reading.”

- (3) a. *Incredible as it seems*, hunger may be completely absent during even an extended fast. (Tottie 2001: 312)
  - b. And, to be frank I suspected also that she never wrote about me, and that I might feel hideously offended, *stupid as that sounds*. (*ibid.*: 313)
- (emphasis added)

Hence, the problem in the previous studies seems to reside in the neglect of the use of

instances such as (1) and (3).

## 2.2 *Comp. as it SEEMs* construction

This section overviews the findings of Kono (2015). The following is divided into the methodology and data (2.2.1), the semantic classification of the complements of *comp. as it SEEMs* (2.2.2), the characteristics of the complements (2.2.3) and comparative analysis with *comp. as it IS* construction (2.2.4).

### 2.2.1 Methodology and data

Data for analysis was collected using the following method:

- i. Complement-as-constructions taking *SEEM*-type verbs (*seem*, *appear*, *look*, *sound*, *feel*, *smell*, *taste*) were collected from COCA
- ii. Complements were classified by applying value types from the Appraisal Theory (Martin & White 2005)

First, samples of the most frequent form (*as*) *comp. as it Vs* were collected. In order to collect all kinds of complements, the form *as it Vs* was used to search instances in COCA<sup>3,4</sup>. After searching, noises such as instances of parts of comparative constructions (e.g. *it is not simple as it sounds*) were eliminated.

The result of token frequency is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Token frequency of each construction

construction	tokens
sound (comp. as it sounds)	203
seem (comp. as it seems)	93
look (comp. as it looks)	10
appear (comp. as it appears)	4
feel (comp. as it feels)	3
smell (comp. as it smells)	0
taste (comp. as it tastes)	0

As the table indicates, complement-as-constructions with CPVs, *seem* and *appear* have uneven distributions. In terms of verbs, the verb *sound*, *seem* are relatively frequent and also a small number of tokens of the constructions with *look*, *appear*, *feel* were found. The verbs *smell* and *taste* were not found in this construction.

Before showing the classification, let us overview the type/token of complements in each construction (4) and (5). Figures in brackets with each complement type indicate the

token frequency.

(4) Complements of *Comp. as it sounds* in COCA (92 types, 206 tokens) <sup>5</sup>

strange (20), crazy (19), corny (18), odd (8), amazing (6), bizarre (6), silly (6), improbable (5), incredible (5), sick (4), simple (4), cliché (3), clichéd (3), good (3), harsh (3), nice (3), simplistic (3), unbelievable (3), counterintuitive (2), funny (2), goofy (2), impossible (2), ironic (2), peculiar (2), stupid (2), unfair (2), unlikely (2), weird (2), absurd (1), anti-humanistic, arbitrary, artificial, astounding, bad, basic, brutal, cold, cornball, cruel, depraved, depressing, dorky, dramatic, egotistical, embarrassing, extreme, great, hokey, horrifying, humble, idyllic, implausible, impressive, intuitive, inviting, laughable, ludicrous, lugubrious, maudlin, messed up, morbid, mundane, naïve, outlandish, outrageous, paradoxical, preposterous, radical, remarkable, ridiculous, rude, rustic, scary, schmaltzy, settled, shocking, sinister, superficial, surprising, tame, tough, trite, un-American, unchristian, uninviting, unorthodox, unpalatable, unsavory, vain, wacky, warped, wonderful

(5) Complements of *Comp. as it seems* in COCA (48 types, 98 tokens)

strange (18), incredible (10), unlikely (8), odd (6), crazy (4), amazing (3), unbelievable (3), absurd (2), astonishing (2), impossible (2), paradoxical (2), alien (1), ambitious, casual, counterintuitive, counterproductive, diminutive, distasteful, dogged, draconian, dramatic, exhaustive, fantastic, frightening, hard-hearted, heartbreaking, horrifying, improbable, incorrect, intense, naive, obscure, old-fashioned, outrageous, petty, remarkable, remote, ridiculous, sad, shocking, significant, simple, small, solid, surprising, unimaginable, untechnical

As shown in (4) and (5), there are a variety of evaluations in the complements. From the next section, we will classify these complements according to the value types from Appraisal Theory.

### 2.2.2 Semantic classification of complements

Appraisal Theory is a systematic approach used to analyze expressions with evaluation and stance in a text. It was developed by Martin & White (2005), based on systemic functional theory as put forward by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004). According to Sano (2012), the approach has been employed by a wide variety of disciplines related to evaluative expressions, such as media analysis, discourse analysis, language acquisition, academic writing, contrastive linguistics, and natural language processing.

Appraisal Theory defines a wide range of value types. The complement-as-

construction in question co-occurs with various kinds of adjectival complements describing a wealth of evaluations and judgments. Classifying the complements collected from corpora according to the value types, enables further detailed analysis.

Appraisal Theory categorizes the value types as “Attitude” and divides them into three classes: Affect, Judgment and Appreciation. Affect is the evaluation of feeling, classified as happiness, security and satisfaction. Judgment is the social evaluation of human behavior with respect to social norms, and consists of two kinds, social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem refers to ‘normality’ (how unusual someone is), ‘capacity’ (how capable they are) and ‘tenacity’ (how resolute they are). Social sanction consists of ‘veracity’ (how truthful someone is) and ‘propriety’ (how ethical someone is). Appreciation is defined as the evaluation of objects and products (rather than human behavior) with reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value. Appreciation is divided into ‘reaction’ (impact and quality), ‘composition’ (balance and complexity), and ‘valuation’ (how innovative, authentic, timely, etc.). Table 2 shows the relationship between value types of Attitude and the evaluative expressions in English.

Table 2: Relationship between value types of Attitude and the evaluative expressions in English system

Type of Appraisal			Positive	Negative
Affect		happiness	<i>rejoice, happy, love ...</i>	<i>sad, unhappy, sorrowful ...</i>
		security	<i>faint, assured, comfortable ...</i>	<i>anxious, startled, surprised ...</i>
		satisfaction	<i>satisfied, pleased, charmed ...</i>	<i>discontent, angry, fed up with ...</i>
Judgement	social esteem	normality	<i>normal, predictable, familiar ...</i>	<i>abnormal, unpredictable, odd ...</i>
		capacity	<i>powerful, mature, sensible ...</i>	<i>weak, naive, foolish ...</i>
		tenacity	<i>brave, careful, faithful ...</i>	<i>impatient, unreliable, unfaithful</i>
	social sanction	veracity	<i>truthful, honest, credible ...</i>	<i>dishonest, blunt, deceitful ...</i>
		propriety	<i>moral, fair, kind, polite ...</i>	<i>rude, evil, cruel, unfair ...</i>
Appreciation	reaction	impact	<i>dramatic, intense, notable ...</i>	<i>boring, uninviting, predictable</i>
		quality	<i>fine, good, appealing ...</i>	<i>bad, plain, ugly ...</i>
	composition	balance	<i>balanced, consistent, logical ...</i>	<i>irregular, uneven, flawed ...</i>
		complexity	<i>simple, intricate, precise ...</i>	<i>unclear, plain, simplistic</i>
	valuation		<i>real, valuable, effective ...</i>	<i>worthless, useless, ineffective ...</i>

Note that usually in Appraisal Theory, value types are given to every element of an entire text. In this study, by considering the prior/posterior discourse, each complement was classified into one of the value types listed above.

### 2.2.3 Characteristics of complements of *comp. as it SEEMs*

This section describes the characteristics of *comp. as it SEEMs*. First, it is worth mentioning that the complements of the construction are basically adjectival. In the case of declarative sentences, CPV construction and *seem*-constructions take a variety of complements (as in (6)).

- (6) a. Jane sounded scared. (adjectival complement)  
 b. Jane sounded a fool. (nominal complement)  
 c. Jane sounded like a fool. (*like*- phrase)  
 d. Jane sounded to be a fool/scared. (*to be*- phrase)  
 e. Jane sounded like she was scared. (*like*- clause)  
 (Gisborne 2010: 251)

On the other hand, complement-as-constructions with *sound/seem*, basically take only adjectival complements. The *like*- phrase or clause as in (6c, e) was not found in the data, and therefore, is considered to be less productive in this construction.

The results of the collected data of each construction are as follows.

Table 3: Complements of *comp. as it sounds* (N=206)

Type of Appraisal			Positive	Negative	Neutral	TOTAL
Affect			0	7	2	9 (4.4%)
Judgement	social esteem	normality	1	86	0	115 (55.8%)
		capacity	0	1	0	
	social sanction	veracity	0	10	0	
		propriety	1	16	0	
Appreciation	reaction	impact	2	28	1	82 (39.8%)
		quality	11	6	1	
	composition	balance	0	20	0	
		complexity	4	7	0	
	valuation		0	2	0	
TOTAL			19 (9.2%)	183 (88.8%)	4 (1.9%)	206

Table 4: Complements of *comp. as it seems* (N=98)

Type of Appraisal			Positive	Negative	Neutral	TOTAL
Affect			0	5	0	5 (5.1%)
Judgement	social esteem	normality	0	56	0	77 (78.6%)
		capacity	0	3	0	
		tenacity	1	0	0	
	social sanction	veracity	0	12	0	
		propriety	0	5	0	
Appreciation	reaction	impact	3	0	0	12 (12.2%)
		quality	0	1	0	
	composition	balance	0	3	0	
		complexity	0	1	0	
	valuation		1	3	0	
Graduation	quantification		0	0	4	4 (4.1%)
TOTAL			5 (5.1%)	89 (90.8%)	4 (4.1%)	98

Generally, as shown in Table 3 and 4, the complements of both constructions have similar distributions. It should be noted that in terms of the polarity of evaluative expressions, most of those complements are classified as negative; almost 90 percent of them represent negative evaluations. Considering the value types of Appraisals, [–normality] (e.g. *strange, crazy, incredible*) is the most frequent type. In both constructions, around 50 percent of all complements belong to this type.

In particular, the complements of *comp. as it sounds* display an idiosyncratic distribution. As Table 3 indicates, we see more instances of [–propriety] (e.g. *harsh, unfair, cruel, cold*), [–impact] (e.g. *corny, cliché, clichéd*) and [–balance] (e.g. *silly, sick, absurd, ridiculous*), compared with those of *comp. as it seems*. CPV's *sound* denotes impressions based on auditory perception and has much to do with the impressions which a speaker may give to the interlocutor with an utterance. As for the construction, *comp. as it sounds*, there are a number of instances in which *it* refers to anterior or posterior utterances.

#### 2.2.4 Comparative analysis with *comp. as it IS* construction

It may only be concluded that the results found above are truly unique to *comp. as it SEEMs*, after it is found that the other constructions do not show a similar distribution. In this analysis, *comp. as it IS*, complement-as-construction with a general copula verb *be*, is the appropriate candidate for the comparison with *comp. as it SEEMs*. For the observation of the *comp. as it IS* construction, 500 randomly sampled tokens (from 1770



tokens) were collected. In order to compare with *comp. as it SEEMs*, only samples of concessive use of *comp. as it is* were used. In the collected data of *comp. as it is* (117 types, 172 tokens), there are 73 tokens (42.4%) of positive evaluation complements, 85 tokens (49.4%) of negative evaluations, and 14 tokens (8.1%) of neutral (ambiguous) evaluations. Thus, there is no uneven or biased distribution to negative evaluations such as complements of *comp. as it SEEMs*. Also, it is significant that the number of tokens of the value type [-normality] are only six (3.5%): *bizarre, crazy, extreme, shocking, strange, surprising*.

The data shows not only that the complements of *comp. as it SEEMs* have a unique distribution but also that the construction with the copula verb *be* is not so compatible with complements of [-normality]. This might be taken as a piece of evidence for the constructional change of *comp. as it SEEMs*.

### 3. Discourse/pragmatic function and politeness

#### 3.1 Manner-of-speaking and discourse/pragmatic function

This section will show that the *comp. as it SEEMs* construction can be regarded as one of discourse/pragmatic markers. As discussed above, we find the *comp. as it SEEMs* construction tends to take complements which describe evaluations contrary to the interlocutor's assumptions and expectations. Generally speaking, these values are deemed as undesirable or unfavorable in communication. When the speaker introduces an unexpected notion to the interlocutor, it may give rise to the situation in which the interlocutor gets surprised and suspends the judgment of the validity. Topics with information related to the complements of [-veracity] (e.g. *improbable, impossible, unlikely*) may give the impression that the speaker is telling a lie. In the same manner, complements of [-propriety] (e.g. *harsh, unfair, cruel, cold*) may give the impression that the speaker is too bold, [-impact] (e.g. *corny, cliché, clichéd*) may give the impression that the content of the utterance is not worth listening to, and [-balance] (e.g. *silly, sick, absurd, ridiculous*) may give the impression that the speaker is joking.

Thus, the preference of the complements of manner-of-speaking is closely related to the discourse/pragmatic function of the construction. In communication, a speaker will infer how the interlocutor receives his or her utterance, and when the speaker introduces content which may interfere with effective communication, he or she infers how his or her utterance will sound and give notice to the interlocutor.

In association with the discourse/pragmatic function, we should pay attention to the position of the complement-as clause in each sentence. Many studies suggest that discourse/pragmatic markers tend to occur in the sentence-initial position (cf. Brinton 1996: 33). More specifically, it matters whether the clause is prior to or posterior to the

main clause. In terms of the position of *comp. as it SEEMs* to the main clause, there are three types: Initial, Medial, and Final.

- (7) a. Initial: *Strange as it sounds*, his children had no idea their father was in prison ...  
 b. Medial: One of the reasons they don't know it is that there's a thread in our culture, *as strange as it sounds*, that making money is bad.  
 c. Final: And, you know, once again, we really appreciated the ice cream, *strange as it sounds*.

As shown in Table 5, the instances in the initial position form approximately two-thirds of all tokens.

Table 5: Position of complement-as clause in sentence

	Initial	Medial	Final	Total
comp. as it sounds	136 (66.9%)	61 (30.0%)	6 (2.9%)	203
comp. as it seems	64 (68.8%)	26 (28.0%)	3 (3.2%)	93

Therefore, the two constructions are similar to prototypical discourse/pragmatic markers with respect to their syntactic positions, and they are regarded as being conventionalized like a sentence-initial adverbial functioning 'preface.'

### 3.2 Metalinguistic use and politeness

The previous section showed that the main characteristic of this construction is its metalinguistic use. As noted above, prototypical complements of *comp. as it SEEMs* construction describe evaluations contrary to the interlocutor's assumptions and expectations. Since conveying such evaluations to the interlocutor can be face-threatening, they should be considered in terms of politeness.

The following Maxims (8-13) are Politeness principles (Leech 1983: 132).

- (8) TACT MAXIM: a. Minimize cost to other / b. Maximize benefit to other  
 (9) GENEROSITY MAXIM: a. Minimize benefit to self / b. Maximize cost to self  
 (10) APPROBATION MAXIM: a. Minimize dispraise of other / b. Maximize praise of other  
 (11) MODESTY MAXIM: a. Minimize praise of self / b. Maximize dispraise of self  
 (12) AGREEMENT MAXIM: a. Minimize disagreement between self and other /  
 b. Maximize agreement between self and other  
 (13) SYMPATHY MAXIM: a. Minimize antipathy between self and other /  
 b. Maximize sympathy between self and other

The use of *comp. as it SEEMs* is relevant to one of the strategies of the Tact Maxim of the Politeness principles, 'Minimize the cost to hearer' or the implication, 'Do not (express the wish to) do what hearer does not want' (Leech 1983: 113). Evaluations contrary to the interlocutor's assumptions and expectations interfere with interaction, in that they can be potential cognitive costs. Some may consider that the uses of the constructions have a connection with the Modesty Maxim, in that potential undesirable reactions of the interlocutor are taken into consideration, and are related to his or her "dispraise." Whether it is the Tact Maxim or Modesty Maxim, the construction is no doubt an expression of negative politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987).

Moreover, we should notice the relation between metalinguistic expressions or hedges and politeness. Leech (1983) and Brown & Levinson (1987) state that hedges are used as a strategy of politeness. Barth-Weingarten (2003) also points out that some uses of concessive constructions act as hedges or 'metacomments.' *Comp. as it SEEMs* can be deemed as one of those constructions.

As in the examples below, some instances co-occur with other mitigation markers like *I'm sorry* or *I'm afraid*, signaling the presence of unfavorable content in the subsequent element as in (14). We can see another use for elaboration or detailed description in a reason clause as in (15) and paraphrastic explanation as in (16). The instances as in (14)-(16), which may sound redundant, are used as metacomments and have interpersonal effects.

- (14) a. I am sorry, Jamie, *as cold as it sounds*, that's exactly what you've got to do.  
 b. There's a lot to worry about. I'm afraid *as difficult as it sounds*, all we can do right now is wait.

(SOAP, emphasis added)

- (15) Biologists have an easier task before them in making maps of all living organisms than faced those early cartographers because, *as surprising as it sounds to a nonscientist*, the genes of nearly all living organisms are almost identical.

(COCA, emphasis added)

- (16) As a most striking point about this particular mimicry, Roy notes that these fungal pseudoflowers do not resemble true flowers of their host plant, *A. holboellii*. Rather, they mimic the yellow flowers of other neighboring plant species, particularly buttercups of the genus *Ranunculus*. In other words, and *strange as it sounds*, fungal infection induces plants to grow in such a way that they mimic flowers of other, co-occurring species.

(COCA, emphasis added)

#### 4. Constructional development of *comp. as it SEEMs*

##### 4.1 Diachronic development from the 19th century in American English

In this section, the diachronic development of *comp. as it SEEMs* will be estimated according to the data collected from COHA in the method introduced in 2.2. Collected patterns are as follows: *comp. as it SEEMs* (*comp. as it sounds*, *comp. as it seems*, *comp. as it appears*, *comp. as it looks*), *comp. as it may SEEM* (*comp. as it may sound*, *comp. as it may seem*, *comp. as it may appear*, *comp. as it may look*), and *comp. as it might SEEM* (*comp. as it might sound*, *comp. as it might seem*, *comp. as it might appear*, *comp. as it might look*). The following table shows the diachronic change of the raw frequencies of each construction. The tokens of the complement-as-constructions with *feel* (*comp. as it feels*, *comp. as it may feel*, *comp. as it might feel*) are not observed.

Table 6: Raw frequency of each construction in COHA (1810-2000)

<i>comp. as it V</i>	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	TOTAL
sounds	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	2	4	3	2	2	4	8	7	10	11	58
seems	1	1	2	6	4	9	8	4	7	5	12	3	3	8	9	6	8	3	6	8	113
appears	0	3	4	1	0	3	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	22
looks	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	10
may sound	0	1	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	4	8	4	2	5	2	2	4	7	5	53
may seem	2	25	31	45	38	50	53	48	37	29	51	31	40	26	22	16	14	6	12	13	589
may appear	2	5	28	20	17	13	16	14	12	6	12	9	3	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	161
may look	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
might sound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
might seem	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	4	2	0	3	3	3	1	5	33
might appear	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
might look	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

It is noticeable in this table that there are a large number of tokens of *comp. as it may seem*. According to COHA, *comp. as it may seem* has played an important role as a prototype since the 19th century. As a whole, *comp. as it may SEEM* was conventionalized earlier and *comp. as it SEEMs* followed it. In detail, in the 19th Century, *comp. as it may seem* and *comp. as it may appear* were frequent, but around the beginning of the 20th century, the number of tokens of *comp. as it may appear* and *comp. as it appears* declined drastically. Given the result of the raw frequencies of *comp. as it SEEMs*, *comp. as it may SEEM*, and *comp. as it might SEEM* in COCA (Table 7), it is reasonable to suppose that until the 20th

century *comp. as it may seem* and *comp. as it may appear* had played a leading part, but only *comp. as it may seem* remained frequent and *comp. as it sounds* and *comp. as it may sound* have increased steadily and are conventionalized in contemporary English.

Table 7: Raw frequency of each construction in COCA

construction	tokens	construction	tokens	construction	tokens
<i>comp. as it sounds</i>	203	<i>comp. as it may sound</i>	102	<i>comp. as it might sound</i>	16
<i>comp. as it seems</i>	93	<i>comp. as it may seem</i>	186	<i>comp. as it might seem</i>	36
<i>comp. as it appears</i>	10	<i>comp. as it may appear</i>	8	<i>comp. as it might appear</i>	2
<i>comp. as it looks</i>	4	<i>comp. as it may look</i>	0	<i>comp. as it might look</i>	1
<i>comp. as it feels</i>	3	<i>comp. as it may feel</i>	1	<i>comp. as it might feel</i>	1

This estimation can be regarded as valid, taking into consideration the development of the upper level constructions, CPV construction and *seem* construction. As previous studies suggest that the development of CPV construction is considered to be triggered by the analogy with *seem* (Taniguchi 1997, 2005), it appears that this is applicable to the development of *comp. as it SEEMs*. In the case of the development of *comp. as it SEEMs*, the *comp. as it MAY seem* construction appeared as the prototype in the early stages of diachronic development, and, subsequently the use of the complement-as-construction with CPVs like *sound* occurred, as is the case with the development of CPV construction. Since then, the *sound* construction has been fully conventionalized, in that it denotes the kind of impression the utterance may have.

Let us turn now to the interpretation of the modal *may* in *comp. as it may SEEM*. The *may* in the construction is categorized as a speech-act modal (Sweetser 1990: 70).

(17) a. He may be a university professor, but he sure is dumb.

b. There may be a six-pack in the fridge, but we have work to do.

(Sweetser 1990: 70)

Sweetser explains (17a) has a similar meaning to the sentence “I admit that he’s a university professor, and I nonetheless insist he’s dumb.” The relation between the main clause and the subordinate clause is schematized as “although *p*, *q*,” a generalized concessive relation. In fact, Palmer (2001: 31) clearly uses the term “concessive” for the similar usage of *may*. Both authors analyze this *may* in a different sense from the epistemic *may*.

## 4.2 Concession and intersubjectivity

Recent studies on concessive constructions have noted that concession is interactional (Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson 2000; König & Siemund 2000) and intersubjective (Traugott & Dasher 2002; Verhagen 2005) in nature. Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson (2000) argues that the cardinal concessive is schematized as conversational conceding based on the interaction of two participants. *Comp. as it SEEMs* is distinct from the cardinal concessive construction, in that the speaker of *comp. as it SEEMs* concedes his or her own prior and posterior utterance. Nevertheless, the speaker acknowledges a prior or posterior utterance based on the inference from the expected or anticipated reaction of interlocutor<sup>6</sup>. It is well known that CPV construction has been developed by subjectification (cf. Taniguchi 1997) and is intersubjective (cf. Whitt 2011), and thus the concessive nature of *comp. as it SEEMs* can be partially attributed to CPVs.

The data provided in the preceding sections also reflect the intersubjectivity. As we saw in Section 2, complements denoting meanings contrary to the interlocutor's assumptions and expectations are unique to the *sound/seem* construction, in that the *be*-construction (*comp. as it is*) does not co-occur with them. One of the reasons is that the *be*-construction is more objective while the *sound/seem* construction is (inter)subjective. Section 4.1 indicates the *comp. as it SEEMs* construction with the speech-act *may* has been frequently used from early stages of development. This modal is also intersubjective in nature.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper investigated the subtype of complement-as-constructions, *comp. as it SEEMs* (*comp. as it sounds* and *comp. as it seems*). The synchronic analysis showed the unique distribution of semantic types of the complements, as well as the construction's conventionalized use of concession and discourse/pragmatic function. Moreover, it can be also regarded as a metalinguistic expression and used as one of the strategies of politeness. The diachronic data from COHA indicated that *comp. as it may SEEM* triggered the development of non-modal types like *comp. as it sounds*. These results all suggest intersubjectivity is the motivation of the constructional development of this construction.

## Notes

1. Tottie (2002) states that there are two types of constructions called "the simple as-construction" (e.g. *tall as he was*) and "the double as-construction" (e.g. *as tall as he was*). This paper refers to these two constructions collectively as "complement-as-construction," as the difference between these two is beyond the scope of this

paper.

2. Previous works described two related constructions, “complement + *though* + S + V” (e.g. *strange though it sounds*) and “Adjective + *a* + Noun + *as (though)* + S + V” (cf. Seppänen 1978). However, there are not enough tokens in corpora, so this paper does not deal with those instances thoroughly.
3. The reason why instances were collected without specifying the type of complement (e.g. adjective) is that the tagging of part-of-speech is problematic (especially for adjectivals). For example, *cliché* and *cornball* (noun or adjective) are originally tagged as nouns, but they can be classified as adjectivals. Moreover, complements like *messed up* are more difficult and are not hit in specifying the part-of-speech tag. (i) *As messed up as it sounds*, he didn't want you anymore, Monica.
4. The object for the analysis is restricted to the constructions with the subject *it*, since it is the most frequent type of all pronouns. The following table shows the numbers of the collected constructions which take *it*, *that*, and *this* as the subject collected from COCA. All constructions were collected in the way shown in 2.2.1.

Table i: tokens of constructions with *it*, *that*, and *this*

construction	tokens	construction	tokens	construction	tokens
comp. as it sounds	203	comp. as that sounds	54	comp. as this sounds	18
comp. as it seems	93	comp. as that seems	8	comp. as this seems	6

5. The reason why the number of tokens of complements in (4) and (5) are different from those of Table 1 is that there are instances which take two or more complements in one sentence.
6. *having said that* is one of the kinds of concessive constructions (Ohashi 2013).

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*Complement as it SEEMs* の構文変化

河野 亘

本稿では、*comp. as it sounds* 構文や *comp. as it seems* 構文が間主観的な構文変化により発達したことを論じる。これらは (as) complement as S V の形式を持つ complement-as-construction (Kjellmer 1992, Tottie 2001) の下位構文である。本稿では、まず河野 (2015) を概観し、アプレイザル理論 (Martin & White 2005) の価値基準に基づく補語の特性を見る。そのうえで、当該構文の語用論的・談話的機能や、ポライトネス理論における対人配慮表現としての用法を示す。また、構文成立過程の観点から、現代英語における通時的変化を COHA を用いて推定し、発話行為的モダリティの *may* を含む構文が通時的なプロトタイプとして発達していたことを示す。以上の共時的・通時的分析から、当該構文は発話行為的モダリティの *may* や SEEM タイプの動詞構文、さらに譲歩構文一般に共通する間主観性に動機づけられている構文現象であると結論付ける。